

6 Cottage Grove Boys Track & Field



Jimmy Talley leads the pack in the 1,500.



Erick Giffen attempts to clear five-foot-10 at the first meet of the year.

Team Rundown:

It's a new era for Cottage Grove track and field.

Last year at the state meet the Lions scored in nine events. With the exception of Jimmy Talley's second place in the 3,000, the rest of the state-scorers have since graduated.

With Marist (second place at state last year in 5A) and Marshfield (fourth place at state last year in 4A) moving into the Sky-Em, the Lions reign as three-time league champions may be in jeopardy but the team still has a host of individual talent. The strongest group the Lions bring back this season starts with Talley and the distance runners.

"Well, not to be cocky or anything, but I want to take a gold medal for state," he said adding, "It's a different season. So I guess that's my goal."

Alongside Talley are seniors Paesen

Timm and Konrad Raum who competed at state in the 3,000 and 1,500 respectively last year. The Lions also have sophomore Drew Chapman who took fourth in districts a season ago in the 800. The Cottage Grove distance crew will have their hands full in districts facing a Marist team that won the cross-country team title in the fall.

In the field events, the Lions have state returners in senior Erick Giffen in high jump and junior Mitchell Krokus in the triple-jump. Giffen, two-time defending high jump champion in league, took fourth at state his sophomore year but was held back by an injury last season and finished 12th. After coming to the event in the middle of last season, Krokus took the league title and finished 11th at state.

One-on-one with Erick Giffen:

After having a tough finish to the season last year, what is the mindset entering this season?

At this point, I'm just trying to build my confidence. At the end of last year, my confidence went a little bit down, obviously. I'm just trying to stay positive with all my teammates and myself. Make sure I'm working hard inside of practice and outside of practice. And hopefully get some PRs this year. *As one of the few returners from last year's state meet, what kind of advice can you offer for the rest of the team?*

I don't look at the numbers, I just try to perform every week. Because I know that with track, the numbers don't really mean much when it comes to the last district meet. Whoever performs there is

where it really matters. I try to tell everyone that has contended at state, don't even pay attention to the numbers, it's a whole different year. Kids could do worse, kids could do better, you never know. Just try to get better and, honestly, just set as many PRs as you can because as long as you are PR-ing and getting better, there should be no worry.

What are your personal goals for this year?

I just want to stay healthy. Last year I was stupid and tried doing offseason sports during track. Being a senior now, I know I don't have to do that. I can still work out but not going to go to open gym basketball and roll my ankle two weeks before the state meet. Just stay healthy.

Good Luck, Kids!

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